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The  
Christian Faith  
and  
The New Day



Cleland Boyd McAfee



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**THE CHRISTIAN FAITH  
AND THE NEW DAY**



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THE  
CHRISTIAN FAITH  
AND THE  
NEW DAY

BY  
CLELAND BOYD McAFEE

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## PREFACE

This is not a reconstruction of theology but a plea for that work and some suggestion of a few typical points where it is needed and opportune. A teacher of theology shrinks a bit when it is said that the day for theology is over; he is apt to think instead that the day has just come for vital religion which will mean a vital theology. But such a teacher knows well that theology can be devitalized by mistaking its own expressions for the truth it is trying to express. Visitors to theological seminaries often tell young men they are not to preach their theology, whereas in any sound way of speaking it is the only thing they are to preach. Yet the most deadly thing that could be preached is a theology that does not carry the message of religion for its own day.

The appeal herein is not to technical theologians but to working ministers and thoughtful laymen who, after all, build and use the theology that is living and who sometimes fear to see it change. The great days just passed have given many of us a renewed assurance that Christianity is more vital and forceful than it has been for many a long day. Its vitality may well claim the right to phrase itself anew — which means to reconstruct theology at any point where it may need reconstructing. Dr.

## *Preface*

Garvie's "informed and responsible" theologians, in and out of the pulpit, have felt the need and joy of it for some time.

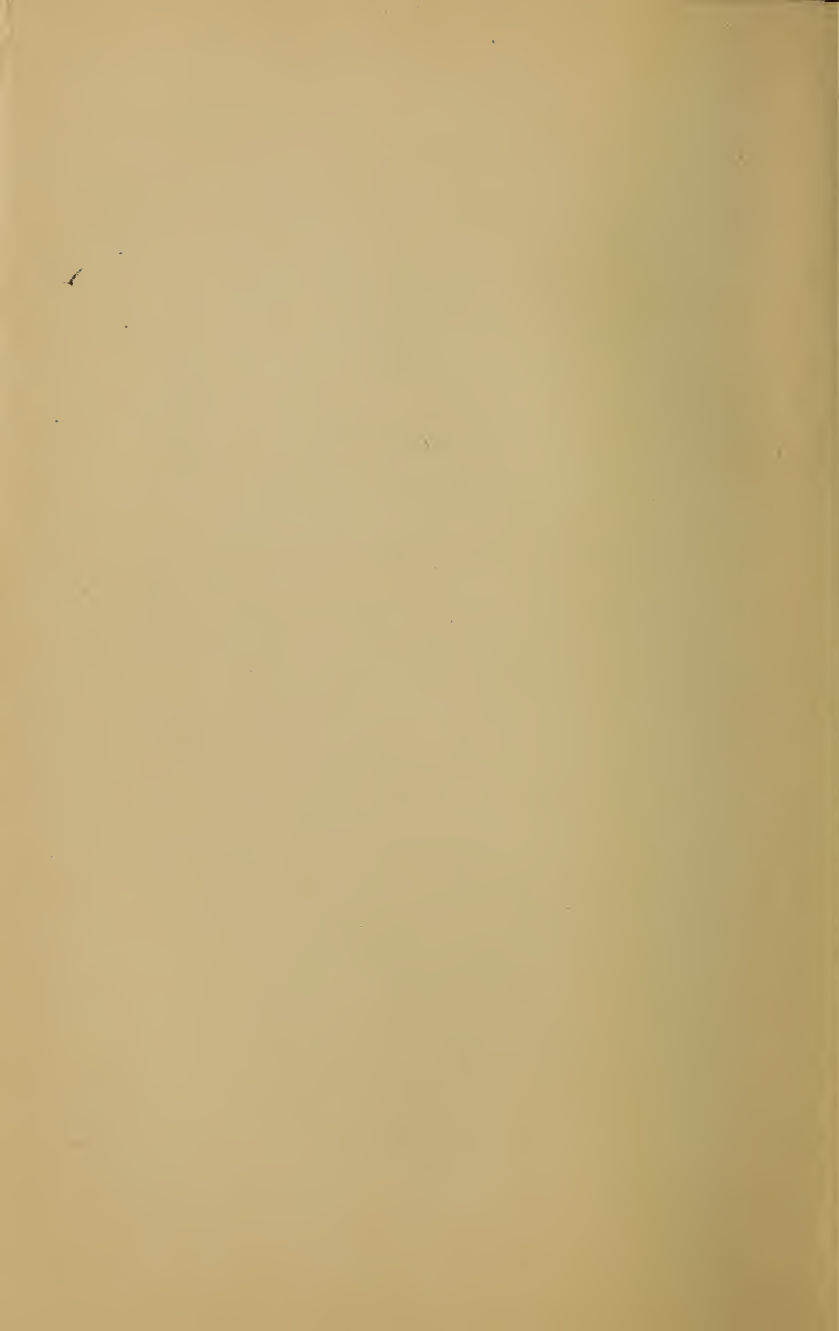
Much of the material was first used in an address at the opening of the Seminary year just after the war.

CLELAND BOYD McAFEE.

McCormick Theological Seminary,  
October, 1919.

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# THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE NEW DAY

## I

### THE CALL TO RECONSTRUCTION

IT is a commonplace almost past saying that the world has been living through times of upheaval. The hour of settling has hardly yet appeared, but it is essential that as rapidly as possible the war be put into the background of our thinking. It has occupied the foreground in the thought of the world for five years, and can never again leave the field of vision of thoughtful men of this generation. It would be a fatal mistake, however, if we should allow it to continue to occupy the focus of our consciousness. Wars do not settle the future; they merely open the way for such settlements as the men who follow them may care to make. God forgive us if we should ever fail to see life against the background of this terrific experience! But it is life that we must see after all. It is the present day task, the present-day demand, that must concern us primarily. Now that the war is over, we are fronted at once with the life that we have to live. It is as when men return from the burial of their dead and life must be taken up again — life

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which never loses sense of that journey to the grave which is in the past.

The new day upon which we enter is not the gift of the war alone. Before the war began or was even anticipated, at least two great movements were on which made for a new day.

1. The first of these was in the economic and social field where tremendous changes were impending. Recent labor disturbances were not born of the war. They were only sharpened by it. Race riots have been made keener by conditions growing out of the war, but something of the sort would have come even if the world war had never occurred and would probably have come before this time if the war had not held it back. The gospel of Christ had been discovered some years ago to be a disturbing element where unequal conditions exist among men. Injustices do not fit into its scheme. The crumbs of Dives are really not enough for Lazarus and there is a feeling that something ought to be done about the remote relation between the two men. Some years ago we said easily:

"The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high or lowly,  
And ordered their estate."

We cannot any longer say that with so much assurance. We are not sure that there were not some influences rather lower than God that might have arranged both castle and gate, and that if His ordering were considered there might not be quite such a difference in their estates.

The world was growing so much smaller that races were thrown together and their differences had to be either adjusted or suppressed in some way. In short, a social gospel was discovered in the heart of the Christian faith. Dr. Rauschenbusch had prepared his little book called *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917), which never seemed to him a completed work but was his witness to the fact that a gospel has to have a theology and that as new phases of religion emerge, they must be rationalized into a system.

2. But beside these economic and social changes, there was also an upheaval of *thought* that was promising a new day. It took two lines. One was a reaction against the day when natural science had been so fascinating as to take the place of every other study. In that day the spiritual forces had been analyzed away and explained on purely natural grounds. One physicist ironically phrased it this way: "All nature reduces itself to matter, all matter to electrons, all electrons to ether, and all ether to an hypothesis." Nothing so vital and so inherently dogmatic as religion could be comfortable with that view and we were at the beginning of a new spiritual accent in the very field of natural science. A good many had come to agree with Dr. McConnell that "Darwin and the martyrs of natural science have done more to make the word of Christ intelligible than have Augustine and the theologians," and had observed with him that "it is little less than marvelous the way in which the words of Jesus fit in with the forms of thought which are to-day current. They are life, generation, sur-



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vival of the fit, perishing of the unfit, tree and fruit, multiplication by cell growth as yeast, operation by chemical contact as salt, dying of the lonely seed to produce much fruit, imposition of a higher form of life upon a lower by being born from above, grafting a new scion upon a wild stock, the phenomenon of plant growth from the seed through the blade, the ear, and the mature grain, and finally the attainment of an individual life which has an eternal quality." (*Evolution of Immortality*, 130.) And whether it was by reaction against materialistic extremes or accommodation to scientific suggestions, the effect of this phase of thought was already becoming noticeable in the field of religion. It was challenging certain accepted views which had been easily held, specially with reference to the relation of God to his world and of the human soul to that same world. If the war had not come this would have had to be faced exactly as it has now to be faced. When Father Tyrrell was asked what he meant by a modernist, he replied, "By a modernist I mean a Christian man of any sort who believes in the possibility of a synthesis between the essential truth of his religion and the essential truth of modernity." At the root of it that either begs the whole question or lets us out into a truism. The synthesis of two "essential truths" was not open to debate among thoughtful men as soon as they realized that they lived in a rational universe at all, but some men were denying the truth of religion and some the truth of modernity, while a growing class was working toward the synthesis with courage and hope.



The other line of this upheaval in thought really led to the war itself. Autocracy and democracy rest upon what people think. They are ways of conceiving human relationships. The struggle between them was coming inevitably. Men were dreaming the dream of democracy in a world where autocracy and a halting unsuccessful democracy were the hard and cold facts. In presence of the failings of our own land and Great Britain sapient people were sneering at our pretensions to democracy. They declared things were better done under a wise autocracy, so well done indeed that autocracy cannot be very bad. We have those sneers now and we had them before the war. And present facts fully justify them. It is dreams, ideals, visions, that counterbalance them. There are Gradgrinds who want only facts, but God's program for the race belongs to young men who see visions and old men who dream dreams. There were many such before the war; their number is increased to-day. The two ideas have clashed on the field of battle and democracy has dictated the terms of peace. No one shows peculiar wisdom in seeing that the terms are faulty and at points undemocratic, but the discussion of this present time reveals the old alignment, part facing a divided world, nations standing each for itself, each claiming autocratic power so far as other nations are concerned; part facing a united world, nations standing for each other, entering a world democracy. For one part, the war might never have been; for the other part, the war becomes a great and solemn obligation.

But it was impossible that a religion which lay

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at the heart of this democratic movement should itself escape the influence of the movement. Theology was already being challenged to be more democratic, to interpret the gospel in terms of democracy, to resurvey its autocratic thought of God, of the church, even of the Bible. The war merely sharpened the challenge, did not create it.

3. But of course the war itself was another upheaval. Already it bids fair to prove a natural incident in history, the emergence of volcanic forces that had been gathering for decades. Dr. G. Stanley Hall (*Adolescence*) declared that careful study of a frog's muscles made him realize that the universe is "lawful to the core." There are even higher forms of investigation that would lead to that same conclusion. We are not compelled to be kicked into it by a frog. The war was not lightning out of a clear sky. It was lightning out of heavy-laden electric currents which had been gathering for decades and whose crash of explosion was as sure as the lawful universe itself. But that we are able to see only after careful scrutiny. At the first it seemed to destroy all values. Even now we find that there must be new evaluations made and some things that were foremost in our thinking must take secondary place or be omitted altogether.

The upshot of all this is that there is no field of human interest that does not need to be resurveyed in this new day: education, government, economics, religion — everything. Some ideas are beyond repair; others can perhaps be touched up; still others have stood the test of the onslaught. Many of the outlines are as completely destroyed

as are the outlines of villages across which the pendulum of battle swung. The history of physical destruction in these past years has been in three chapters: first the frailest things went down, the weak superstructures, the twigs of trees, the shrubs; then stronger things went down, trunks of trees were shredded or cut off at the roots, stone walls were crumbled to powder, the surface of the earth was plowed as with an earthquake; then there appeared a few abiding realities which were not broken; here and there an arm of stone reached up out of the hills and occasionally out of the plains and did not break under the shells that fell upon it or around it. There were not many of these, but most of the men who have seen have felt the thrill of finding one here and there. But all the while, and at the deepest of the ruin, it is only the surface that is churned up. Each of the chasms cut into the earth rests at its bottom in the undisturbed earth which has received the wound but abides still.

These are also the chapters of the destruction of recent years in the spiritual world. First, for thoughtful men there were swept away some carelessly accepted complacencies which are supposed to be valuable but have no force in a time of strain; then there went more permanent ideas and we do not yet know when we shall recover them and what their renewed condition may be. Even to the end, however, there lasted the great verities rooted in the deep substance of humanity, expressing the ribs and keel of the moral universe. Some men have surveyed the field of spiritual destruction in these

past years and have found none of these granite unpreachings. Others have seen them and rejoiced. Henry Drummond said of Millet's *Angelus* that its special charm lay in its combination of three attributes of human life: love, labor, religion. No one has suggested that love has been lessened in meaning by the war nor that labor has less meaning. Let no one suggest that religion has been lessened either. But as love has been challenged to become greater and more inclusive, and as labor has been called to assume new and heavier burdens for the enlarged circle of human responsibilities, so religion is challenged to enlarged outlook and wider outline. This is the undercurrent of a typical letter from a soldier in France just before he started for home:

"Throughout my year of service over here, I have heard the men arguing and talking and have been observing a great deal. I fully believe that in spite of the plain fact that in many cases ideals held back home have been lost over here for the time being, yet there is a fuller faith, a clearer insight to true values, and that the 'old' religious habits, so much discussed and written about, will again be taken up back home, and, having the faith and insight gained over here added to them, will clear the atmosphere for a wholesome, sincere, religious life. I do not look for an immediate radical change, such as greatly multiplied church attendance and so forth, but I think the change will be steady and consistent toward a real religion of service, where little differences of creed will be disregarded and real essentials be acknowledged."

There was awful significance in the presence across the warring countries of religious symbolism. It was impossible to escape a sense of contradiction

in what one often saw. Here is a village, after the war and back of the lines, where soldiers clad and trained for warfare pass and repass, where vice walks openly, where women practice evil for gain, where men lie wounded and broken in hospital or stricken with disease in isolation camps — everything speaking of moral and social failure. Meanwhile, there rises above it all some hoary tower or sharp spire crowned with a cross, or an arched doorway symbolizing the presence of religion. There is no escaping the conviction that *this* must conquer *that* in order to a rational world, but which is “this” and which is “that” is an abiding question. Whether we are to hope that the force which the tower and the spire and the cross symbolize shall overcome the force which the other objects in view symbolize has sent many a heart-burdened man to his quarters with a new seriousness. But over and over as one passed the fields where the destruction has been greatest, or walked the streets where moral weakness revealed itself, one caught glimpses of the abiding reality of these spiritual forces which have not been destroyed in the midst of other calamity. Scenes of undying love, of unwearying labor, of unbroken religion spring before one’s eyes in the instant.

It is wisely said that there has been no change in the fundamentals of religion. Well, for that matter, there has been no change in the fundamentals of anything — in government, nor human relationships, nor national responsibility. They have become more important than ever. But a sharp question has been raised about what are really



fundamentals. What is this reality in government, society, education, religion, which can take so deep a gash and yet abide? The surface has been cut and gashed in the sight of all thoughtful men; what is it that took that gash and reveals itself at the bottom of it? In presence of that question some lists of "fundamentals" which are solemnly pronounced by some of the brethren are so petty as to seem incredible. These are not the things by which men's souls live and die and that they grasp when the earth heaves beneath them. Our thinking will have to go deeper than that.

Theology ought to follow the movements of religion. Doubtless when once it is formed it tends to mold the later expression of the highest religious life. It often goes beyond individual experience. There is a prophetic value in all faith; it gets us ready for experience yet to come; probably it never grips us fully until the experience does arise. But we do not go into the future safely with only that faith which we have already personally tested. It is not therefore suggested that theology shall express only the experience of a day or an age but only that it shall be rooted in religious experiences in the large way. The Christian theologian is not standing a humble suppliant at the edge of the world's struggle, asking what he can learn from it, and how he can modify his supposedly eternal truth to meet its conditions, his theology held in solution the while. He is in the very heart and center of the struggle, feeling it at its deepest and studying it with eagerness and pain, wanting to know where and how his faith furnishes rescue and

help and anxious to discover that phase of his eternal truth which fits the need. His system is ready for reconstruction as the need of the world calls for new accent and assertion here or there, though he may be sure that the truth which he has systematized is lasting.

Our practical, working theology has, especially, to sum up the movements of religion in our own day and to furnish the program for the day that lies just ahead. The real question is, therefore, whether there have been any changes in religion in recent times which require reconstruction of any part of its rational expression in theology. Has anything happened in men's relation to God and to one another which needs to affect our formal doctrine? And for most of us the answer must be in the affirmative. Not at all that wholly new facts have come across our horizon; not that either God or man has fundamentally changed. Probably Principal Garvie is right in saying (*Christ and the World at War*, 54) that nothing in the war has required any informed and responsible theologian to revise the articles of his faith. No new facts of God or man or sin or duty have emerged. At the same time there can be no doubt that some things look different in the red glare of war and in the disturbances of recent years and will always look different afterwards.

Three special demands are made on theology just now which call for reconstruction at various points:

1. That it shall make recognition of the democratic movement, examining again all those points

where it has rested on autocracy and arbitrariness, and magnifying instead its personal and moral elements. In three points at least this examination is necessary — in the theology of God, of salvation and of the church.

2. It is required of theology that it hold itself steadily to the test of experience, experience conceived largely but none the less really, and that it give full credit to those elements in experience that have sustained men in their time of strain, adjusting its speculative elements to such realities. Again the three elements of its thought of God, salvation and the church enter into the reconstruction.

3. It is required of theology that it furnish a working basis for the program of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is not to be merely a rationalizing of what men have felt but a projection of that experience into right relationships for the future. That is, theology may not be static; it must be vital. It must be what men may live by and what will produce the rich new order for which they have hoped and dreamed, for which some of them have died in these late years.

Such things call for reconstruction at certain points. Just how they will be faced will depend largely on the disposition of the one who deals with them. A story is going the rounds of an "eminent doctor of divinity" who closed a discussion on a difficult theological problem by saying, "Well, gentlemen, speaking for myself I think I may venture to say that I should feel inclined to favor a tendency in a positive direction with reservations!" Doubtless that is rather fine for a man who has



grown old and still feels that he may be on the threshold of the house of knowledge. Doubtless also it is a wholly impossible attitude for men who are going to meet and deal with the questions of the new day as they should be dealt with.

It is possible also to take the attitude of a familiar scriptural incident toward these questions. It is in Acts 19 when the Christian faith was being introduced into Ephesus and a certain Alexander tried to address the crowd gathered in the public square. The account says that when they discovered that he was a Jew a roar broke out from all and for about two hours they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" That he might be a Jew with a new message, that he might have light to shed on the dark places in life, that he might have such arguments as would strengthen and not destroy their faith, they did not stop to consider. They merely set up a dogmatic tenet of faith against him. The town-crier had much the better of it for he argued that such noisy assertion paid the compliment of fear to folly and that all sensible men knew that Diana is great! If one must choose between merely dogmatic assertion which tries to stop the spread of a new idea and the indifference that insists on taking the old truth for granted, it is the latter that has the field to-day, but neither is possible for men who sense the new day. Nor will they be dealt with by abandonment of truth in the interest of other truth. When Conan Doyle spoke of the eternal "duel" between men and women, Frances Willard asked if he did not mean the eternal "duet" between men and women. When it is proposed

that between truth and truth there is a duel, the same correction comes to one's mind. Hegel suggested that the real tragedy of progress is not the struggle between right and wrong but between right and right. It is truth against truth that makes the tragedy of the progress of which we are speaking. The question theology has to face to-day is not whether it shall count what it has held false but how it shall find the underlying reality of those surfaces which have been broken and provide for the rebuilding of the order which has been destroyed.

## II

### THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF GOD

WE turn first to the Christian thought of God. A chaplain at the front wrote what many men felt and still feel, that "the essential question is, What is God like?" Of course that is an essential question in theology always. It is a more popular question than it has even been in this generation. Atheism is neither the fashion nor the concern of most men now. One of our American surgeons can return from the battle fields and write a grewsome and unsympathetic book on the mechanistic conception of war and peace, in which men are warned that they must expect no help in their struggle from above or outside themselves. But an equally able surgeon, spending longer time there and giving his own life even more fully can return to Great Britain to say that he can find no ground for the mechanistic conception of life and that "the indomitable logic of facts has driven (him) to the conclusion that behind all and above all there is an intelligent and beneficent Mind, immanent in nature and in the life of men." Atheism has no vogue to-day.

1. There has developed instead a utilitarian idea of God. Men have wanted to know what was the use of being religious or devoted if it does not bring results in their outward lives. Professor Gilbert Murray thinks that recent events have tended to

discourage the higher kinds of religion and immensely strengthen the lower. An English writer adds that for many men God has been merely the equivalent of an extra rifle. It always puzzled such men that soldiers who said their prayers at night got shot the next day, while those who never troubled to pray went scot-free. They could not see under those conditions what was the use of religion.

A similar feeling underlies the discussion of the religion of the countries involved. Is not any talk of the victory of righteousness to be qualified by the fact that the central powers of Europe were as actively professors of religion as those who opposed them? The question presupposes that religion is utilitarian and God a useful factor in bringing things out of the way we like them, the trouble in the case being that He was invoked on both sides of the conflict. It must be admitted that there has been some warrant for that in theology and in much current religion. For example, it has been strongly argued that God's relation to the world is such that we can count a calamity a punishment for some particular evil. How were we to explain the war? We were urged to say that it was a judgment on the drink bill of England, or on the atrocities committed by the Belgian king upon the people of Africa, or on the desertion of the Christian faith by France or on the materialism of America. One popular leader rings the changes on the phrase that God is "squaring the account" with Belgium, skeptical France, and other nations, as He "squared the account" with the Jews for rejecting Christ by having them harried and dis-

tressed by Titus and Vespasian. The earthquake in San Francisco was because of the sin of the people there. A theater burns down because of the mad rush of people for pleasure. The inference is that if a city were soundly Christian, there would be no earthquakes, and if people did not madly rush after pleasure theaters would not burn down. That is, religion would be immensely useful in warding off otherwise natural calamities.

There is a verse, to be sure, which says that godliness is profitable for the life that now is, and obviously it is true in its sphere. But if theology makes out of that a tenet it must reckon with a relation between outer experiences and inner conditions which would be exceedingly difficult to work out into a system, unless we fall back into the ranks of the three friends of Job and declare that suffering is always measured by the sin that precedes it, the greater the sin the greater the suffering, and there are indications that this theory does not meet divine approval in the long run. Some men, like Job himself, find it simply impossible to agree to it while they are passing through the experience. It is only while one is looking on from a distance that it seems logical.

The truth is, we need to get our idea of God on the basis of morality and off the basis of arbitrariness. Teachers and social officers in general are compelled to adopt arbitrary punishments for offenses. There is no logical connection between my stealing a horse and my being put in prison, nor between my striking a man in the face and paying ten dollars fine. One does not grow out of the other. The

two are simply attached by law. That is arbitrary and the best we can do. But in God's plans sins work out into logical consequences. In an important sense, the crime produces the punishment. The man who tells a lie does not get slapped in the face nor put into prison for ten days. He has something far worse happen to him and by no ingenuity can he escape it — he becomes a liar with all that that means in a moral order. Something eats into his character. He loses his inner reliability. It is not something done *to* him — that is left for society to see to; it is something done *in* him — that is what God sees to in his moral order. God's way of punishment is immensely more dreadful than our way of doing it. Bringing earthquakes on evil cities would be exactly our way of doing it, and we would encourage ourselves to it by the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, assuming that the divine eye could not find in any city the necessary ten righteous men whose presence would make the destruction of the city because of its wickedness unfair by divine declaration. Ravaging Belgium would be just our way of "squaring the account" for Congo atrocities committed by rulers over whom the suffering people had no control. God's way of punishing is far more serious than ours. There is not a city that is not suffering under his moral hand at this moment for the evils it has encouraged. The punishment of England for its drink bill is only too obvious in England to-day, not in something done to England and Englishmen, but in something done in the very midst of England and deep down in the powers of



multitudes of the English. France has marks enough of the penalty of its refusal of the inspirations and safeguards of religion. And the materialism of America — its punishment runs deeper than a European war! Society handles an offender physically. God handles him morally. The ominous thing is not being punished but being the kind of person who ought to be punished and who in a moral order can no more escape punishment than he can escape any other inevitable consequence. That conception of God's relation to events in our lives is not at all common, and it was missing it that led so many men into purely utilitarian ideas of religion. There was an element of truth in their thought, but it lacked a moral basis.

2. This is only a hint, however, of the serious question which theology has to face to-day in its thought of God. It is peremptorily confronted with the double problem of God's omnipotence and of his love — how it can hold the two together, what it means by both, how far each of them extends. It was natural that the great question about God should be an old one only sharpened by recent conditions. How shall we conceive a God who is all-loving and all-powerful, in whose world certain kinds of things happen? We faced it years ago in social conditions and many earnest social workers, loving their fellows, quietly abandoned religion and God in their plans and set out sacrificing to correct conditions in which it seemed that God was not concerned. Social settlements appeared in most cities which made no pretense to any religious impulses. We count them mistaken,

and weakened by the omission, but their mistake roots in another farther back, and it was our mistake. We had not worked out the relation which any really powerful and loving God would hold to the world. In a village in France a Christian minister of mature age, experienced in church leadership, said to me that a God who could sit calmly in heaven while his children were being tortured without giving them any sign of interest and without putting out his own hand to stay the ruin, could no longer command his respect. The remark was made in a conversation when I was asking him to undertake responsibility for some definitely religious work, which he almost scornfully refused.

Some one is responsible for men ever having such a thought of God as that. It may not be the theologians, though some of them are doubtless to blame; it may be the ministers, though doubtless we have sometimes spoken as though there were somewhere such a God; but for some reason thousands of persuaded Christians went into this direful situation with that thought of God—that he was either unwilling or unable to keep this thing from happening. Down in their hearts they were sure that if they had the power they had always ascribed to him, they would have stopped it. It was the old, old dilemma—either God did not love men enough to care, or else in spite of his loving, he was not strong enough to prevent what occurred. As one writer declares: “God is helpless to prevent war or else he wills it and approves of it. There is the alternative. You pay your money and you take your choice.” That is, you



cannot have an omnipotent and loving God and not have everything the way he wants it. You can surrender his omnipotence as Mr. Wells and Studdart Kennedy think they do, or you can surrender his love as many depressed people do; but you cannot have both and keep your eyes open to the facts of life — that is the argument.

And if the current understanding of God's omnipotence were correct, the conclusions are perfectly right and we are thrown back as Christians on silence as the only fitting habit in presence of so great a mystery. The truth is, however, that this view of God's omnipotence is almost completely mistaken. It is an idea of power lowered to a purely physical basis and it should be lifted to a personal and moral level. God's relation to the world is a personal one when we come into the realm of personalities at all, and in the personal field there can be no such thing as physical omnipotence. Persons are not handled on that basis. Persons could not exercise omnipotence in that sense if they had it. What we mean by omnipotence is that God has power to do anything that he can do and go on being God. There are some things which are impossible to God just because he is God. An irrational act is impossible, no matter if it does involve merely the exercise of physical power. An immoral act is impossible. An act unworthy of himself is always impossible for any person in the degree of the development of his moral personality. It is impossible, that is, that in a moral world we should be treated as though we were not moral beings; that in a rational world we should be handled on

an irrational basis. Herein lies the truth in the Wells view — there are limitations upon the divine action, limitations which he has himself imposed or which are imposed by his being himself and not some other kind of a Being. They rest in the thought that he is God, acts in God-like ways and not in crassly physical ways. If we are to be in a rational world the means that are set for ends must not be triflingly handled, abandoned when they are not pleasant, resumed when it is arbitrarily determined to do so; and if ends are to be sought at all they must be sought in ways worthy of the world in which we are to live.

The war itself is a good evidence of the omnipotence of God, in that it showed that the moral universe was maintained in the midst of the chaos of destruction. The one Being who did not fail in the whole cataclysm is God. In the physical world he did not fail, for there was never a bit of shrapnel or ammunition which did not obey the law of its being to the last fraction. In the moral world he did not fail, for the moral forces have wrought themselves out exactly as we might have known they would if we had thought enough about them. The only failures in this war have been in the limitations of personalities where men have not reacted upon the call of morality as they should. The distresses of the war have arisen from a firm universe in which still lies all our hope. We ran against a universe that did not even quiver when we struck it. How its firmness works purposes or love in our weakness is always a living question which finds its answer in the fact of

God's personality and his moral relation to other moral beings. That is the force of two stanzas written long before the war but more full of meaning to-day:—

“The cry of man's anguish went up unto God:  
‘Lord, take away pain—  
This shadow that darkens the world thou hast made,  
The close-coiling chain  
That strangles the heart, the burden that weighs  
On the wings that would soar;  
Lord, take away pain from the world thou hast made,  
That it love thee the more.’

Then answered the Lord to the cry of the world:  
‘Shall I take away pain  
And with it the power of the soul to endure,  
Made strong by the strain?  
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,  
And sacrifice high?  
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire  
White brows to the sky?  
Shall I take away love, that redeems with a price  
And smiles at its loss?  
Can ye spare from your love that would climb into Mine  
The Christ on his cross?’”

And we find that we do not really want an easy universe. Whether its difficulties and distresses are for the production of these results or not, it is obvious that the results do come out of them. It is by a ruling or an overruling. In either case, the richness of life, its very existence as a moral order, its very fundamentals of social relationships, indeed, the only hope for our becoming self-respecting because divinely respected personalities, runs back to these experiences. Somewhere we have

to get these results. It is open to us to argue that they should have been gotten some other way. It is not open to us to argue that they are not worth having if this is the only way to get them. What we want to know is only that these troubles and distresses in a moral order are leading somewhere. And that runs us back squarely to a God who is morally and not merely physically powerful and who is rational enough to wield in the moral world only moral weapons.

And that, in turn, is the essence of democracy. It does not imply that we and God are on an equality; not even men are that in any democracy nor any possible human order. It does imply that God is never autocratic in dealing with personalities, that in the moral order there is a fine and inspiring respect paid to personality and its rights, that it is never arbitrarily dealt with. Such an assurance would have made impossible the saying of a religious leader in our own country, that it is not to Kaiser William that we are to look, but to Kaiser Jesus, and that the only autocrat who needs never to give an account of himself is Almighty God. In no historical sense of the word can God be called an autocrat, and in every sense of the word he does give an account of himself to any heart that asks account. He is a sovereign, and the only one the earth knows, who gives his subjects liberty and trains them to freedom, allowing them in the process of training such wanderings as their personalities choose, harmful as they may be.

Theology must restate its doctrine of God until

the attributes ascribed to him do not conflict with the central fact of his moral personality.

3. We are required also to universalize our idea of God's love. We have been thrown so closely together that it is quite impossible for us to continue feeling that the love of God runs on narrow lines or is based on special actions on the part of men. A young Japanese once said to me quizzically that the largest peril of the present reigning family in his nation lies in chemical analysis, for it may happen some day that a drop of blood of that family may be analyzed at the same time as that of a peasant and when they are found to be exactly alike, then it would overthrow the theory that the royal family is of peculiar divine origin! Paul was probably not thinking in chemical terms when he said something very similar in Athens to the effect that God had made of one blood all nations of the earth. We have held that theory without hesitation but some of our theological dicta have obscured the facts from our minds.

The verses of Scripture on the universality of the love of God are clear enough until you begin to interpret them. A practical, hard-working minister said a while ago that John 3:16 has to be interpreted to be understood and that we must not take too easily the meaning of the "world" which God loves. The argument is this: God is infinitely holy and in the nature of the case he cannot love anything that is unholy; the "world" that he loves cannot be the world of evil men therefore, and God can love only those who are good, made good by

Christ's redemption. Christ came that God may love the world, that he might make it the kind of world that a holy God can love and still be holy. And I recall inquiries from thoughtful, Bible-loving laymen asking for texts to indicate that God's attitude toward all men is that of a Father, their own study of Scripture having led them to the thought that God's fatherhood, apart from mere creation, is only toward Christ and those who come into filial relation with him through Christ. How could he be in any sense Father to bad men, who are of their father the devil? The conclusion seems to follow from the premises.

Most theological systems of the past set out from God's holiness. Everything was to be tested by that. He could not treat sin as he would like because holiness forbade it. Out of that position came the popular thought that Christ is God's mercy preventing his holiness from doing what it would have done because of sin. Out of it came the theory of the atonement that finds in Christ's death a satisfaction for God's holiness by supplying an adequate punishment for finite sin. In the hierarchy of divine attributes, holiness is supreme; whatever God may be or do, He will not sacrifice that trait. It demands a right penalty for sin and the penalty is necessarily that meted out to offenders against the rightful sovereign. The sin is infinite because it is committed against an infinite God. It is unspeakable rebellion because the holiness of God is spotless and awesome. The death of the sinner is inevitable, therefore, unless the love of God, taking full account of the heinousness of the sin,



should provide a way of escape. This saves the holiness of God as well as the sinning man.

Later writers have set out from God's love and have allowed that to overshadow his holiness and the evil of human sin. Popularly it began in America with Henry Ward Beecher in his reaction against sterner views of his father Lyman Beecher. According to this view, God can do anything with sin and evil that he cares to do because he loves sinners so much, and Christ's atonement becomes merely an evidence to sinful men of God's love which could disregard sin the instant the sinner repented. Nothing in God called for the atonement; only the sinner's blindness to the divine love required it. Special stress is always laid on the parable of the prodigal son and the welcome of the father without reference to any effort of the sinner to make atonement for his sin or any plans of the father to make it right. His love counted it right as soon as the son permitted it to do so. Love is given the highest place in the hierarchy of attributes.

It must be said that neither view has worked well in these recent crises. We feel somewhat as Lord Morley felt at the end of his *Recollections* about the effect of science on human progress, written in the shadow of the war: "Has not your school — the Darwins, Spencers, Renans and the rest, held the civilized world, both old and new alike, in the hollow of their hand for two long generations past? Is it quite clear that their influence has been so much more potent than the gospel of the various churches? *Circumspice!*" If we are to

assume that religious ideas are to have any influence at all we shall have to say that no one has anything to boast about just now. The two schools are busily blaming each other. Each is sure that it was the loss of its own particular point of view that explains the mischief. Everything in recent years has confirmed the extremists of both wings in their most dogmatic positions. A naïve student asked if the war would not result in the correcting of both the "liberal" and the "conservative" wings of theology and the church! Nothing is apt to do that. Books and articles are in ample evidence now to show that the war has proved both sides right! If only the world had taken account of the holiness of God, or if only it had reckoned with the love of God—everything would have been different. The real error was in taking the other point of view which landed the world in a spurious idea of God and duty. There seems to have been little heart-searching about positions to which men were solidly committed before the war. Now that it is over, we are having the same opposing schools, starting with divine holiness or with divine love.

Meanwhile, many thoughtful men are hesitating over this easy habit of playing off one attribute against another. A reconstructed theology must set out from the point of view of a total personality, not making any one trait or attribute a test, any more than we do with finite personalities which we understand better than we do infinite ones. The holiness-theologies undoubtedly gain strength and rigidity. The love-theologies gain warmth



and tenderness. But either gain can become loss when it is carried out of reach of the other. Increasingly it becomes evident that there can be no warfare within a total and complete personality and that no trait sits on the throne of such a personality. The traits of God are all phases of the one central face of his Person. There can be no holiness that is not loving. There can be no love that is not holy. Tenderness that is not strong is not even tender, and strength that is not tender is not even strong. All this, provided we are thinking in terms of personality. If we should lose ourselves in terms of physical endurance and force, the situation would change, but we must not lose ourselves there.

Now, if we think in terms of personality, letting it include all the traits that go to make up moral character, it is not difficult to universalize the love of God. He can love sinful men, as the Bible says he does. The whole plan of salvation wrought through Christ becomes an expression, increasingly natural as we come to understand it, of a personal relation to persons. It is an outcome of a holy love or a loving holiness such as, when once it has occurred, we see to be wholly logical. Very probably it is too great a thing for us to have foreseen. But so is a glorious sunset or a radiant waterfall; it is only after we have seen it that we realize how it expresses the forces resident in nature. We could not have known the plan of God for the saving of men, but once he makes it known, we can work it out as a natural outcome of his being the God he is.

Theology needs to leave the arbitrariness of its theory of God's action or his attitude and to find in his infinite personality the assurance of his moral relation to moral beings. That is what democracy suggests. Moreover, it is what experience sustains and it is the hope of the future for further moral development.

### III

## THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF SALVATION

It was suggested that a second matter which theology has to face with new interest is that of salvation. Two questions emerge afresh: What does salvation mean? and, How is salvation accomplished? They are not new questions at all, but events of recent years have made certain answers impossible and have cleared the way for certain sounder answers.

A careful use of words would probably show that there is not much difference among Christian teachers between "being a Christian" and "being saved." Some would object to the identification, on the ground that some were "saved" before the coming of Christ and others since His coming who have held no conscious relation to Him and cannot be called "Christians" in the familiar sense. But these have settled on a use of the word Christian to which others would object as too narrow. If they believe that some are "saved" without reference to the historical Christ, it is still because of what Christ represents in history that God "saves" them. On the other hand, those who insist that it is only through knowledge of the historical Christ that men can be "saved," will of course insist also that the two phrases are identical. The

phrases come to mean the same thing, with tremendous differences between thinkers on what it means to "be a Christian." Whatever it means, that is also what it means to "be saved." Perhaps it need hardly be said that no such identification would be admitted outside the distinctively Christian circles, and that there are ways of declaring it which would be offensive to many Christian believers. For all that, in practical uses the connection is certain.

With that assumption we may need to face anew the old question, What is a Christian? When can a man count himself a Christian and when can the church count him one? Since a man is necessarily a thinking, feeling, choosing being, the test may lie in any one or two or all of those points. What must he *think* in order to be a Christian? How much creed, how much right opinion, how much belief, enters into it? Or what must be his *spirit* of life? Is he to *feel* something or some way, and if so what is that feeling and how is it to be brought about and made permanent in his life? Or is it a matter of *choosing*, taking one road or another at the parting of ways, and what is the choice? What issue of life is actually involved? And if we say that it is all three, then how far must a man go in each before we can say that he is a Christian?

Test it sharply, and in a very narrow field, by this: If a man is following Christ as his master of life, letting his decisions be shaped by his sense of Christ's will, trusting his love and grace, and yet doubts or denies his virgin birth or his mirac-

ulous power on earth or his essential deity — will you count him a Christian brother? Of course it is open to you to say that he is illogical and that the things he denies are implicit in the things he accepts so far as he does go; but is he, illogical and defective, to be counted a Christian brother and welcomed to all the rights of brotherhood? You consider that he acts admirably and thinks abominably; what will you think about him as a Christian? If he wanted to join your church, would you want him to do so? On the other hand: If a man is clear and convinced on the things just mentioned, regular in his public religious activities, but runs his business on a cruel, inhumane basis, disregards the rights of his employee or his employer, discourages all movements for the bettering of industrial or economic conditions if they disturb his business or his work — will you count him a Christian brother? Again you can say that he is illogical and that if he were true to what he says he believes he would act differently, but is he, illogical and defective, to be counted a Christian brother and welcomed to all the rights of brotherhood? In this case, you consider that he thinks admirably but acts abominably; what will you think about him as a Christian? If he wanted to join your church, would you want him to do so?

That is far more than an academic question but it is primarily academic. It is a theological question, for it requires us to state what we mean by salvation. Most of us reveal our instinctive or developed sense of fundamental Christianity by saying Yes, about the first man whose life is

right and whose ideas are defective, and either No, or a hesitant Yes, about the second who reverses the situation. Being a Christian has come to mean to us being a man who takes a certain attitude toward God and his fellows that is expressed better in his way of living than in any other way. It is an attitude inspired by Christ or caused by him or like his or some way allied to him, but it is an attitude toward life and God and righteousness and humanity. Salvation is vital, not mechanical. Being a Christian is not a formality but is a description of a living process. So living is it that this very quality creates much of the confusion in the common use of the word "salvation." It has a commencement, a continuance and a consummation. Sometimes a man is called a Christian or is spoken of as saved at any one of those stages. An evangelist tells him he can be saved before he goes out of the door; he says himself that he is being saved increasingly; and he prays that God may save him at last! It is by a true instinct that one word has been allowed to cover all those experiences, because they are all phases of one vital process, which begins and goes on and finally gets somewhere. Meanwhile, holiness is not abnormal; it is merely wholesomeness in a moral universe. A Christian is not a special kind of man; he is a normal man in the world of a moral God, living the normal life. Most of us have an uneasy feeling that this is at least the way it ought to be, though we are apt to be a bit concerned over the way it must look to people outside! It is not always easy to observe health of soul in some whom we



count saved, nor in ourselves, but that is surely what being saved ought to mean — moral wholesomeness, sane adaptation to the rational universe. Believing on Christ makes a man a Christian because it starts him on a way of living and gives him an attitude toward God that he did not have while he wanted his own wrong way.

But even if we should agree on that, we still have before us the question sharpened by the war as to the way in which this new relation to God and to life is brought about or how this health of the soul is accomplished. We do not end the discussion by saying that since the man becomes a *Christian* it must be done by Christ. Certainly, but what is theology to mean by that? How is it to rationalize the experience that comes with it?

And we are shut up to three positions among which we must choose. First, we can say that all salvation comes from conscious and intelligent acceptance of the historical Christ and his saving work, which is what most Christian people say, and what most of our theology implies. Or, secondly, we can say that while Christ saves all who believe in him, yet there are others who are saved by being honest with what they do believe and practice; which is what a great many Christians practically believe about the heathen and their neighbors whom they like but who are not doing anything about their souls. Or, thirdly, we can think of the historical figure of Christ as accomplishing in time what had been the eternal fact in God and can find the Holy Spirit of God working before and since that historical fact among multitudes of



men who have not known the history, saving them through the sacrifice of Christ, redeeming them by his death as truly as though they saw him plainly. In this view Christ is still the only Savior, yet he saves far more widely than under the first view. There are only those three positions, if we are to talk of salvation at all.

It was no phenomenon peculiar to this war that men dying on the battle field were accounted saved. It has been the thought of every war to some degree and it is the thought between wars when men die heroically for others. He is a feckless man who raises public question about the eternal safety with God of any man who passes through such an experience, no matter what his previous life may have been or what his personal character was. A man who casts away his own life to save a child or any innocent person becomes immediately a hero and washes away his past stains in public thinking. It is a persistent thought. Some take it as evidence of the pride of the human heart that seeks to save itself by some merit of its own. Others are not so sure. It is an idea worth examining just now.

Such a calamity as that of recent years has re-enforced the central Christian principle of vicarious sacrifice, practiced by Christ and laid down for his followers. A philosopher who fortunately was not spared to witness the shame of his own nation (Paulsen, *System of Ethics*, 159) said it years ago: "The world lives by the vicarious death of the just and innocent. Whatever system-loving theology may have made of it, it remains the profoundest philosophical-historical truth. The nations owe their

existence to the willingness of the best and the most unselfish, the strongest and the purest, to offer themselves for sacrifice. Whatever humanity possesses of the highest good has been achieved by such men and their reward has been misunderstanding, contempt, exile and death. The history of humanity is the history of martyrdom; the text of the sermon which is called the history of mankind is the text to the Good Friday sermon from the fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah." Over against this must be set much accepted thought.

It was only in the summer of 1919 that there died a man who must share largely in responsibility for the mistaken thinking which underlay the errors of the Central Powers of Europe. Ernst Haeckel was never immensely popular in Germany, but the main idea for which he stood and which his *Riddle of the Universe* set out had tremendous weight with the leaders of the nation. Personally he was far finer than his creed. His pupils speak of the contradiction they felt between the necessary conclusions of what Haeckel taught and the apparent spirit of the man himself. The story goes back to Darwin and the *Origin of Species*. The theory of the struggle for life and the survival of the fittest came to Haeckel as a revelation. He took the book to Italy for a time of study and assimilation and found himself committed to the theory in its baldest form. Darwin and his Anglo-Saxon followers never took it so unrestrainedly as did Haeckel. With them there was always the note of altruism when the higher ranges of life came into view, an altruism hinted even from the first. What came

to be called "the struggle for the life of others" appeared alongside the struggle for life. Love became a factor and love means sacrifice. John Fiske's contribution to the theory, the prolongation of infancy in the human species as the foundation of the family, is a phase of that new factor. For Haeckel there was no alleviating factor. The strongest survive in the struggle and they deserve to survive, showing their worth by their survival. That naturally plays into the hands of the strong. Rising against them is defying the law of the universe. They are up because they deserve to be up. It is not to their interest, nor within their responsibility, to have lower people come up. The strong have the right to rule; they have earned it. This involved the denial of any personal or moral factor at the heart of the universe, and for Haeckel God is not to be conceived as a Person or as having interest for humanity. "God is the universal law of casualty" and all things are grounded in that law. The Christian law of progress by sacrifice, the principle of vicarious suffering, could have no place in that scheme. It was Paulsen against Haeckel, and for Germany Haeckel won, but for the world Paulsen won.

Jesus has prevented our narrowing that principle to his own sacrifice by calling all his followers to take the same path and accomplish in lesser ways the results which he accomplished greatly for the race. The apostle Paul frankly rejoices in his sufferings for the sake of his friends at Colossae (Col. 1:24) and for the sake of the church because he is "filling up" in those experiences "that which

is lacking of the sufferings of Christ." The saying is much discussed, but there can be no question of its obvious correlation of the sacrifices and sufferings of the Master and of His disciples. It is nowhere pretended that their sacrifice is equivalent to his own, and yet it is of the very essence of the Christian faith that self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice, shall be magnified and its greatness recognized.

It is no wonder that such sacrifice, on so magnificent a scale as a great war presents, or as the closer relationships of the better social order demand, should challenge theology to interpret and evaluate it. And much theological thinking of the past has prepared the way for finding a saving value in this personal sacrifice by centering its attention on the single event of the death of Christ as the one saving fact. Instead of emphasizing the fact that it was the death of *Christ* that is God's way of saving men, it has disconnected his death from his person. Actually it is Christ who saves, not just somebody who died on Calvary. Once get salvation on a cataclysmic basis and you are ready for a change of cataclysms. Connect it with one historical event, dissociated from the events or the character that precede it, and you have introduced a note which can be sounded regarding other events as well. But get it on a vital basis, a change of relationship, and you can challenge proposals for that change which are not adequate.

The Westminster Confession speaks at one difficult point, how difficult no one knows better than a teacher of theology, of the fact that the Holy Spirit worketh when and where and how he pleaseth.

At this other difficult point we need to keep that in mind. It is never well to set arbitrary bounds on what the Spirit of God may be doing with the saving power of Christ. Experience with men in the war, as with many men outside the war, shows how often sins are the surface fact and a spirit born of God is the underlying fact. There are men who show the mastery of God first of all in their outer lives, correcting their speech and their habits; there are other men who are mastered there last of all, their inner spirits being changed almost without their own realization. Christ has girded them, though they have not known him. God is holding them, though they do not recognize his hand on them.

A chaplain who had once been my student stood by me one evening as we prepared for a meeting when I would address his men, men with whom he had gone through blood and fire. His one charge to me was confirmed by many experiences of my own: "Do not argue for God with my men; they have all had an experience with God. What they need is some one to interpret their experiences to them, to help them realize that it was God in very truth with whom they had their dealings in the great hour when the experience came to them." Many men have awaked from their desert sleep whose memory of their vision is so dim that they do not know enough to say, "Surely God is in this place," until another, an interpreter for God, comes by and recalls the vision.

Only Christ can save—we can be clear on that. No new question has necessarily arisen about



it. We may ground the assurance on the Scripture or on the nature of the case, on history or on philosophy, as we think best, but the case can be argued without anxiety. Theology has no occasion to alter its familiar position regarding it. But when we speak of Christ, what do we mean? The historical figure of Bethlehem and Calvary—of course. But is he more and other than that? Does he save men who do not know or recognize his name? Does he form his new life within diseased souls and make them whole, or give them the beginnings of new health, while they think they still reject him? And deeper than that, may not men reject every vision their fellows have given them of Christ, who yet would rise up to meet him as Lord and Master if they once saw him as he is? To all these questions, events of recent years have enabled us to give a joyous affirmative answer. It is a sound feeling that men who show in their crises the spirit of sacrifice have found a point of contact between the human spirit and the divine phases of the human order. It is not personal sacrifice that saves; no one knows that better than the men who have offered themselves for such sacrifice. Personal suffering does not set a man right with the moral universe; no intelligent sufferer thinks it does. But the presence of that spirit in the life argues for an open way to harmony with the central principle of the moral order. Men may go all their lives indifferent to what they suppose Christ means, and then find him when their own path of life leads them into view of Calvary and his cross. It is in the vision of *Christ as he is*, not as some

one else says he is, that every soul takes its position. In that vision the soul inevitably says, "There is no beauty in him that I should desire him," or else, "My Lord and my God!" But the soul may have come to the very end with no real vision of Christ, in spite of the faulty, feeble attempts of other men to make that vision clear. There are ways of presenting Christ which every soul ought to reject; they are morally unsound, religiously impossible. And there is no way in which he is presented by any one kind of men that can insure a true understanding of him by all other men. Yet it is he and not some one's idea of him that tests character. And what makes that so tremendously eventful is that it announces one's attitude toward the universe, acceptance of its fundamental principle or rejection of it. It is not an arbitrary condition which an autocratic God has set up. It is an expression of the central fact of the moral order. Yet we often speak of it as though if God chose to have that kind of a test for the soul, he had a right to have it and he could have had any other test if he had chosen. We must come to a deeper sense of it than that. If there is to be a moral universe at all, then it is exactly this kind of reality which determines the attitude of the soul toward it.

That is the force of the saying that when the Holy Spirit comes He will convict the world of sin because it does not believe on Christ (John 16:9). It is a recognition of Christ as a test fact. Men who do not approve him when he presents himself to them do not approve God, nor a right humanity, nor the moral universe. Sin is not a



mere violation of some undefended law arbitrarily imposed; it is getting wrong with the universe and God; it is what Josiah Royce called treason, proving traitor to even a larger reality than his "beloved community." If men do not morally "take to" Christ, then they do not "take to" the fundamental law of the universe, not as an arbitrary ruler has constructed it, but as the moral sense demands it. Murdering and stealing and lying are not the heinous sins of the moral life; they are not the offenses on which Christ laid his finger. Their heinousness grows out of the fact that they reveal an utterly wrong attitude toward the fundamental laws of the universe. It is selfishness, unbrotherliness, lack of care for God and one's fellows, usurpation of the best things for one's self rather than devotion of one's best self to God and man — it is this that concerned Christ and that lies at the root of all the offenses that we call sin. Yet nowhere is this very quality more condemned than in the character of Christ, and if a man does not believe in him, then he does not believe in God or his fellows or the universe, and he is a castaway in the nature of the case. And central in the whole scene is the spirit of sacrifice which is the secret of the cross. Attitude toward that will decide the salvation of any man. He takes God on those terms or he does not take him at all.

Now that is difficult to realize in the regular placid ongoing of human affairs, but it is impossible to miss when the upheavals come that test the soul. When the test does come and men find themselves throwing life away for an invisible cause, or sharing

the strain and need of their social group at their own cost, then the meaning of the cross of Christ grows clear, grows clear as the natural expression of the law of a universe of a moral God, and it is no wonder that other men looking on feel that when the sacrifice becomes complete those who face it face also the supreme and saving instance of it and yield themselves to it. A God who can inspire men to heroism that casts life and all else aside may surely be expected to reveal himself to them with unmistakable clearness for their allegiance. He saves them by his own sacrifice, not by theirs, but it is their sacrifice that makes his grow real to them. It is like the revelation of the meaning of God's fatherhood that comes to a man when he finds himself a father. He may have heard of it all his life, may have believed it, may have preached it, but he knows it best when something in his own life feebly, haltingly, but really matches it. It is not *having* an earthly father that makes us know our heavenly Father best; it is *being* an earthly father that makes it clearest. It is accepting the principle of sacrifice for one's self that makes the saving sacrifice of Christ definite and meaningful.

The whole area of the saving of Christ will thus be immensely widened. We are not to speak in terms that imply occasional salvation and general loss. We shall not identify the evidence for salvation with certain formalities or alliances. We shall look for those evidences quite as truly in the spirit with which men face the needs of their fellows and the sacrifices they are ready to make in the interest of their fellows. Self-protection, self-

defense, self-seeking will never let one into the secret of the way of life; they lead the other way. But self-sacrifice, self-forgetfulness, self-giving, lead toward Calvary and men who take that path find life because God has opened a fountain of life at Calvary. It is his grace that inspires sacrifice; it is he who has made it the law of the advancing life, it is he who saves when men have yielded themselves to that law. It is all of grace, but it is not abnormal, for the universe is built on the principles of a gracious God.

## IV

### THE CHURCH

REGARDING the Church, recent years have developed three main groups of thinkers. One group have lost all hope for it; they count it moribund, out of date, useless. They would be willing to have it die, if they did not count it already dead. Christianity is handicapped by it and could well dispense with it. The hopelessness ranges all the way from the feeling that a spiritual force like Christianity ought not to have any organization at all to the saddened recognition that a once desirable institution has failed to adapt itself to new conditions so long that it is finally incrustated and cannot change. In books on reconstruction, it is not common to find any reference to the part that the church may have in it. Many of the writers have ceased to reckon it in as a factor; it is good enough for people who like it or have any sense of need for it, but "its purposes are ornamental and sentimental." With some of this group the thought confirms the hope. They have not cared for the church in any case. Always they have looked at it from the outside. With others, the decision has come after years of effort to get certain things accomplished in the churches when they have run constantly against immovable obstacles which have left them bruised and broken and have

not allowed progress. These are regretful but convinced. It is quite needless to talk to them about the theology of the church. Indeed, with most of this group it is needless to talk about the theology of anything!

Another group think the church is yet to become Christian for one reason or another. It is the hope of the future and if it will open out to the new day its life will continue. Some of these observers are not sanguine about the readiness of the present leadership of the church to make the necessary changes, but they expect the changes, for all that. Others see signs of better times ahead, when the church will rise to meet the new day. They count it an essential institution, rooted in the nature of Christianity, and they are not inclined to discount its history, though they do declare the recent cataclysm to be a revelation of its present inadequacy as a force among men. Part of the group expect it to open out to the new day at the point of broader interpretation of Christianity; part at the point of more efficient organization. Reconstruction in the theology of the church is to them an entirely familiar conception.

The third group are not willing even to discuss anything adverse to the church. What are called its faults are not faults of the church at all, but only misinterpretations of its real life on the part of the individual. "There need be no fear for the church. God will take care of it; it is Christ's body and He will not desert it." Many who speak in these terms are thinking of the spiritual fact rather than an organization, but others mean what-

ever the church actually appears to them to be. It is next door to blasphemy to speak of the destruction or death or disappearance of the church. A divine institution is not subject to the changes of human periods, and the gates of hell have sought to prevail against the church ever since its founding, so that there is nothing new or startling about present conditions. Obviously for this group any talk of reconstructing the theology of the church is nonsense or worse.

Plainly, there is room for a fourth group to form — those who believe in and love the church and just because of their love feel that the church must both live in and guide the life of the day, not of this day but of every day. In one true sense all days are essentially alike and so there is a fundamental continuity in the church. In another sense, this is a new day and another may yet come which will be new to this one then old. So there must be new adaptation of the machinery and mentality of the church. This group was vigorous before the war and is even stronger in view of the experiences of the war. The readiness of church forces to meet one striking emergency encourages them to believe that it will meet the more prosaic but more abiding emergency which the new times present. For them, the theology of the church will bear reconstructing in the light of the new demands of the task of the church.

Oddly enough, though the church is the most obvious of the three facts we are considering, it is most difficult to say just what is the path to its place in a reconstructed theology. That it must



share in the democratic movement in practice is clear enough, not that it may go on living, but that it may render the service to which it is called. But it is not so clear what theological changes are necessary to bring it to its right position. Three fairly simple elements must enter into it, elements not new to thoughtful leaders.

First, *the theory of the church must be put in terms of vitality rather than of institution.* It is an organism, which has an organization. Its outer form must not be allowed to determine or limit its inner life. Thomas Chalmers, withdrawing from the Established Church of Scotland, said to the royal commissioners: "I have no veneration for the Church of Scotland *qua* an establishment, but I have the utmost veneration for it *qua* an instrument of Christian good." Men cannot fail of a certain amount of veneration for the institution with which their religious lives are associated, but there are some who identify the channel with the grace that came. Only that identification could justify the recent protest of Bishop Gore against any unity with non-conforming churches "except on the ground of repentance, reconciliation and absorption," with refusal of pulpit exchange and withholding of the Lord's Supper from the non-confirmed unless they are in danger of death and express a desire for reconciliation with the church! The honesty and frankness of the protest are admirable, but the revelation of a type of theology is obvious. It is only more explicit than the view of the church which prevails elsewhere. For it identifies the church with its organization, and that is nothing



unusual. In every church are those who think that without this or that there can be no church, and most of them rest the thought either on history or on Scripture teaching.

As for Scripture, it gives one pause to discover all of his brethren rejoicing in the evidence for their own particular type of organization in the New Testament, whereas he wonders that they do not see how his own particular type is required. There grows upon him the feeling that the New Testament is not a handbook of church government but a seed-plot out of which any kind of government can grow that the inner life may need. And as for the history, that is a matter of valuation and depends on what one likes in church strength. What one man counts the secret of power another may count the weakness of the church at any given time. Pride in one's ancestral line is modified by unmistakable failures of that line to function as a church ought to do.

Paul's figure of the church as the body of Christ is capable of a deadening or a vitalizing interpretation. We can think of the church as having to have this or that kind of organization, certain kinds of officers, a certain kind of sacramental observance, certain orders of worship, and so on because the "body" we are accustomed to has them. "Bodies cannot be thrown together higgledy-piggledy," says one advocate of institutional uniformity. A real Christian church must be orderly, and any thought of church unity must wait on the appearance of "bodies" which are rightly formed. We are warned that "we have no way of shaking hands

with other men if they have no hands;" which is true but not particularly important unless it is proved that we cannot have communication with other men in any way but by shaking hands. On the contrary, we may interpret Paul's figure vitally — the church being a body informed by the life of Christ and taking such outward form as will best express that life. That it will have an outer form is clear, and it is wholly possible that certain forms or one special form may prove best under given circumstances or at a given time. But the outer form is for the purposes of its inner life and not for its restriction. To insist that the life shall not be recognized under any other than our favorite form and then to find defenses for our view in verses of Scripture is to cramp the life of the church and to endanger its unity.

All the influences of recent years are with the insistence that methods of government in civil affairs are measured by the service they render the people whom they govern, rather than by the officers they have. Democracy does not need Presidents or Governors. Autocracy does not need Kaisers or Czars. Either can frame for itself forms of government of many sorts. And the vital thing has proved to be the life that expresses itself in the forms. In such a day we cannot go on pretending that the church of Christ can be identified with any one form of organization. As the movements for church unity gain in momentum, we shall observe that element of reconstruction all the more.

Secondly, *the theory of the church in its relation to man must rest increasingly on its outgoing rather*

*than its incoming life.* Essentially the church is not an inviting body, calling people to come to it; but an offering body, giving something to the world in the name of Christ its head. It must lose itself in the needs of others. Keeping itself alive is the last concern of any vital church, when it is proposed as an end in itself. Christ has given it a simple method of self-preservation: it saves its life by losing it; it keeps its truth by sharing it; when it forgets itself, God remembers it. Any theory of the church which magnifies its importance in other terms than those of service is astray in these days. Its outgoing current is in two lines — in the truth it has to teach and in the life it has to share.

a. As to the truth — the church is a teaching body; it has something it wants the world to know, not something the world may take or leave as it pleases, but something the church is passionately determined it shall learn and live by. Its Master once declared that he had come to bear witness to the truth; so has the church come. That decides its methods of teaching and the contents of its creed. It has no right to hold anything important which it is not eager to teach and which it does not believe would change the world if it could only get it learned. It must set up no theory of proper methods of teaching which do not rest on a conviction of the swiftest and surest ways of getting the business done. The sharp contrast between the normal response of men overseas to religious messages and the response of men on this side under our accustomed ways of presenting the truth is causing many men of experience to ask serious questions. No one

expects the church to use in normal times and conditions the methods which proved effective in abnormal times, but many thoughtful men are insisting that the same results get accomplished somehow. We may look for a large increase of unusual ways of putting the truth to men, and our one concern is to be whether it is the real truth and whether it really gets taught. Here is a letter from the former minister of a large and influential city church, written after his return from successful service in Europe with soldiers:

"I look back upon my year in France and Germany with the utmost satisfaction. I truly believe it has been the best year of my life. I think most of us who were over there feel that way. In the Pauline sense, there was a mental and spiritual intoxication we enjoyed. It is going to be difficult to live the sober life of conventional and respectable parish work. The question that has been occupying my mind this summer is whether or not I shall go back to parish work. . . . I do not think I could go back to — church or any other to engage in the usual before-the-war activities. . . . What has been absorbing my mind is how we are going to get at that great multitude of young men, who throwing off their khaki have melted back into civil life. You know how they came to us over there. You know how they listened to us. Many of them, doubtless, had been church-goers. Most of them had not; at least that is my opinion. Will they be coming back into our churches? Reports thus far are not encouraging. . . . There is a great chasm between the ordered worship of a church and the experience of the average man who has not been accustomed to its service. Its dignity, which you and I love, to him is dull. Its whole program, including the sermon, is not interesting. And yet we have learned that to many of these men, religion is not uninteresting and without power."

There is no escaping the issue involved. Will the church find a way of getting its message heard, or will it be so devoted to accepted methods that it can blame the world for not hearing? Will it confuse a theory of work with the work itself? Will its teaching theory bend to its teaching need? When the late Dr. Benson was appointed to the See of Canterbury, Dr. Hort wrote him a note, not of congratulation but of warning, in which he said: "The danger for the English church is its calm and unobtrusive alienation in thought and spirit from the great silent multitude of Englishmen." Sir Hiram Johnston has written just now that the reason why people stay away from the church in England is that "much of the traditions, teachings and precepts of the Christian churches are actually out of date." Most Americans pride themselves on a nearer relation between churches and the mass of people than in England, but it is nothing to boast of even if it exists, for it is a difference of distance rather than of nearness. And men under the spell of the memorable acceptance of the message they had to deliver during the war have come to wonder whether our ordinary way of declaring these truths has any connection with the lives of the men they are meant to help. But that is hardly a theological question.

Yet of course it opens the whole question of what the church feels itself set to teach. And that is the old question of creeds. We have been through a hard term of school as Christian believers in the past five to twenty-five years. Our lessons have been long and we have been held to our tasks at cost of

blood and brain. Were we meant to learn anything new or were we meant only to be confirmed in what we already knew and were neglecting? Our creeds are what we tell the world about our faith; they are what we want the world to believe. Agreeing that what we have told in them is true and good, do we also agree that it is told as we now see it and as it will be best seen by the world we are here to serve? Sin, selfishness, ambition have always been bad; but never before have they led to such a world condition as we have experienced. Have we then no new word to say about sin? Vicarious suffering has always been a spiritual reality, marvelous in our eyes, but never before has it seemed so great a reality nor so surely an issue from the heart of the universe; is there nothing more to say about it than we say in our creeds? The omnipotence of God — do we believe less or more about it? Would the world know — just mentally know, not spiritually — would the world know what we mean by what we say about the omnipotence of God? Can we put our creeds in the hands of men of the present day and trust them to make out our case for the Christian religion? It is quite certain that in general we cannot.

Every church has to test itself as it faces the world by such questions as these, in this new day. Churches that profess no written creed have the same necessity upon them to analyze anew those tacit credal articles which are often more rigorous than spoken ones, but it is much clearer in the case of churches whose formulas are set down in public declarations. Two questions are inevitable: Do



they hold their creeds with the passion due to such days as these? Do they find in their creeds the truths they want to tell the world as they want to tell them? Instant answers come from two groups within these churches. One group reply that what is needed is to bring the church back to the unchanged creed, refusing to admit the need or right of changes. Its members cannot escape the uneasy feeling that talk of alteration to meet a current need is only half-disguised surrender of vital realities. They feel strongly that the church has lost its passion for the creed, and they say, "So much the worse for the church!" They want the army brought up to the Colors; they call for a revival of the church rather than a revision of the creed. It is the answer always to be expected when alterations in accepted positions are suggested, and it is rooted in a theological conviction — that the church is a depository of truth rather than an agency for the service of its day.

In all credal churches there appears another group who hear any talk of creeds with impatience. "They are dead; why not let them stay dead?" A member of this group writes that there was never such a good time to forget the existence of creeds as now when everybody is restive under authority or regulation. To propose attention to their contents now is only to divert the church from its late-discovered task of world-ministry. Which also expresses a theological conviction of the essential nature of the church as an agency of service rather than a teacher of truth. And the special difficulty of this latter position is that there is not a credal



church where the issue is not a vital one with scores of honest young men every year. The creeds actually are not dead; they are very much alive when these young men solemnly face them as the declared faith of their lives. If they find that the creeds represent a point of view or contain teachings which they cannot preach, they must either accept the explanations which a sympathetic instructor or pastor gives, or accept the stern charge of other men to stay out of the ministry unless they can accept the creeds literally. If they find that the creeds omit something which they consider essential to the full message they are sent to deliver, they must immediately surpass their creeds at the very point where they are apt to feel most convinced of their message. No one can come close to young men in training for the ministry of any credal church to-day, nor indeed to the young men of any church, without finding that the discussion of the creeds is no academic matter.

The question may be fairly stated if it is directly applied to a familiar instance, the one most directly under the eye of the writer. It is not of universal importance in itself, but it may be held as typical. Probably the Presbyterian churches have held as heartily and loyally to their position as credal churches as any others and their Westminster Confession of Faith is available and well known to all churchmen. Attitudes toward it vary from literal devotion to sharp dislike. A considerable group of ministers and others speak of it as document laid on the shelf and negligible. Others speak with renewed amazement of its excellencies. Every year

scores of young men stand before their brethren and declare that they accept it "as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." If some of their older brethren have discarded it, these at least can hardly begin by discarding it while their ordination vows are fresh on their lips. In addition, hundreds of elders and deacons in these churches declare every year their acceptance of it in the same terms. If there is to be a credal church at all, this is the way it must be.

For more than seven years it has been my duty to survey this extended Confession carefully with keen-eyed, honest-hearted young men, who are not prepared to take vows lightly. Trifling with creeds is no habit with them, but they come to the document in the atmosphere of this day and not of an earlier one. And no one who has not made a fresh study of an historic creed in the full light of this year of grace is prepared for a helpful opinion about what ought to be done with it. Still, it is no judgment based on recent strident conditions but a conviction born of many years of careful and admiring study of it that leads to the definite assurance that these churches everywhere should face anew the duty of revising, rewriting or replacing the Westminster Confession. Perhaps a statement of the grounds of that conviction will illustrate what is meant by the call for a reconstruction of the theory of the church as a teaching agency, for they apply to several other historic creeds held by present-day churches. There should be no pride of method in making the change. Carefully selected men might sit for five or more

years in counsel over the matter, but the work should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Five facts are borne in on one in studying the Westminster Confession of Faith as a document for this new day of divine leadership: first, the Confession is too long for the purpose of the church; it goes into details for which the church can claim no passion and no deep-down assurance; it simply cannot insist that it yearns to have the world of unsaved men commit itself to all these thirty-five chapters. Secondly, the Confession is too academic and philosophical. The Christian faith has a philosophy, but it is not essentially a philosophy in itself. The Confession is far more academic than the Bible and less vital. If any one thinks not, he has not lately read the Confession or else he has not lately read the Bible. Thirdly, the Confession is too polemic — not so polemic as many think, and not antagonistic. Its mood is not belligerent, but neither is it winsome. It is not aimed at the hearts of men; it is not a call to the wandering world with the good news of a Father. Its purpose is not to commend the Christian faith but to state it without reference to whether men care to accept it or not. But the church cares mightily and it ought to show it. Fourthly, the Confession is too old in some of its phraseology and it is naturally lacking in terms which the advance of Christian thought has made wholly familiar to believers and to the world. That defect could be made good with some ease as to particular words and phrases, but the tone of the two new chapters differs widely from that of the

older ones and illustrates what I am arguing just now. Fifthly, the Confession is partial to certain phases of truth and either minimizes or overlooks certain other phases which have immense meaning for life to-day. The fact that it seemed necessary recently (1903) to add two chapters to the Confession and on such subjects as Missions and the Holy Spirit is startling in its implication. How could two such subjects be omitted or slighted in such a Confession? But if we look for that universal love of God and the program of his Kingdom of which we have been speaking, we shall miss them also. The Confession does "contain the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures," but its accent and emphasis are not wholly those of the Scriptures and its system is finer than some of its parts in any case.

The mere illustration may pass without interest to many who are of other denominations with or without formal creeds, but the point of it cannot be unimportant to any Christian believers and specially to Christian teachers. That point is that a sound theory of church teaching requires it to be such as makes for passion and earnestness, that it is to be vital and not merely academic, that it is not to be polemic but winsome, that it is to be kept fresh in the tones of the day, and that it is to set out the full orb of truth as it has come to be seen in the day in which the church is living. With some men this is all matter of course; with others each item is open to contest. At the root of it the difference is theological — in the field of ecclesiology, to be technical.

The main ground of concern is not primarily for

the church itself. It is for the world to which the church must bear its message from God. That world is more open to truth to-day than ever before. The church must be more eager with its message, its whole message and nothing but its message. If it cannot put passion and enthusiasm into its task it must in all decency give way to some agency that can meet the splendid new opportunity. Any part of our theory that conflicts with so obvious a fact needs reconstructing.

b. The outgo of the church is not in truth alone but in the *life* which it has to share. Christ has called men to come to Him; He has never commissioned the church to call men to come to it. His order to the church instead is to go to the world, bearing His life to the world. The static, limited theory of the church has always stood in the way of that.

For a long time the *extensive* outgoing of the church has justified itself. The missionary battle has been won and no respectable theory of the church to-day could omit its obligation to carry the gospel to every creature. But the *intensive* outgoing of the church is not yet accepted in some quarters. The arguments against it to-day are precisely the ones that were formerly used in opposing the missionary program. Texts of Scripture were quoted against missions, though now no one doubts the drift of Scripture in its behalf. The understood program of the Kingdom of Christ was against it, though no one now doubts that that program is for it. The hopelessness of the task was urged, though now it looks feasible. The very will of God was used

against it; he did not mean that it should be done, because he had other uses for the heathen than to have them learn the gospel. And these are the very things urged against aggressive and intensive social service on the part of the church. Texts are quoted against it, regardless of the drift of Scripture; the program of the Kingdom of Christ is used against it; the hopelessness of the task is urged and the increase of social evils is all but gloried in as evidence of that; the will of God is used here also — he has given over the world to its arch-enemy and it is no longer the object of his love and redeeming purpose except in the destruction of most that now is. The theory of the church which this implies is clear enough. It is not a church of outgo, not a body with a redeeming message to society. Its gospel has power only for redemption of individuals, or if it has further power the church is not to use it. Its message is only to individuals whom it may hope to redeem from society. The concern of the church for social evils is not part of its gospel except as it gives redeemed individuals a better chance in the world. As for making a transformed human order, that is not part of the program committed to it.

So we find the familiar distinction between humanitarian work and religious or Christian work. It gives point to a familiar story in which a welfare organization lays before a Young Women's Christian Association secretary a proposal for help for an industrial group, and is told, "You seem to forget that this is a Christian association, not a moral one!"

But in recent years some thousands of Christian



men have found themselves serving the needs of their fellows in very material ways, with sacrifice and devotion. The question is whether they should have been doing it in the name of the church or not. Was it because they were Christians? Did they have an obligation as followers of Christ to do this sort of thing, or was it some side issue of their lives? Was the church back of them when they ran a Y. M. C. A. canteen or only when they conducted a religious service? Were they churchmen when they fought the evils of a camp or a billet, or only when they called men to Christ? Here is a Chautauqua lecturer telling what he has seen in sixty-nine small cities where he has spoken, remarking that churches generally have occupied themselves with denouncing evils but have done little or nothing constructive. "Ordinarily in these towns there is not one single person or influence interested in directing the recreational life of the people in a definite, constructive fashion." Well, what of it, so far as the church is concerned? Is that any special business of the church? Some say not. They want nothing in their pulpits but the "pure" or the "simple" gospel, and unless their people are winning individual souls they are not conceived to be doing church work at all. A minister writes to his church paper to say that he thanks God he did not mention the war in his pulpit, but gave himself to preaching the gospel, and he does not propose to be diverted now into any talk of a league of nations. In one large religious gathering a speaker declined to approve a church movement because it recognized the Y. M. C. A. which had "lost its religious ac-

cent " and was giving itself to humanitarian work. In an address opposing a movement for church co-operation because it declared itself prepared to speak for the church on matters of international morals, civic reform, industrial disputes, and the like, a noted religious leader and head of an institution for training Christian workers declared that these are all commendable things and every intelligent citizen ought to do all he can to forward them, but to bring the church into such work is "for the Bride of Christ to become a harlot!" Now, quite apart from the insult that offers to Christian men who hold a different view, it is endurable as an unmistakable expression of a certain view of the church as an agent of life. On that theory the Christian must steadily surpass his church in human interest and human service. Errands for humanity that challenge his deepest devotion and strain his energies at their best need expect no coöperation from the institution which is or represents the body of that Christ whom he is trying to serve before his fellows! It must be narrow; he is to be broad. It is to confine itself to one line of effort; he must exert himself in many lines.

It is a curious situation. Many of those who hold this restricted view of the church's duty as an agency of life are far better than their theory calls them to be. They are doing actively and earnestly exactly what they think it is no business of the church to attempt. They are concerned for the welfare of women and children, eager for legislation and reform in labor and housing, working for purer city life. Indeed, these facts are constantly used to

argue that their theory of the church of Christ and of his program does not prevent large activity in this wider field. But as a matter of fact their theory would prevent it if they lived by it, while the Spirit of God in them is stronger and finer than the theory they hold for the church. If it is the sole duty of the church to win individuals out of the wreck, then in all fairness the men of the church ought not to be diverting their energies from that woefully needed business to these works of welfare that take time and money and strength. Whatever returns such efforts yield, they are not large in this particular field of the rescue of individuals from the social wreck which according to the theory must continue until it becomes absolute. Those occasional churches which draw off their members from all worldly activities and center everything on the winning of lost men, leaving the dead to bury their dead or to cleanse their own hopeless evils, are logical if that is the sole business of the church in this dispensation.

And yet, here is the British Labor Party with a document that rises to great heights as a statement of essentially Christian ideas; here are Rotary Clubs and Chambers of Commerce announcing programs that sound like little sections from a Sermon on the Mount — is that the church's business? If we say that the church inspired these movements, then was the church about its real business in doing so? For this new day that issue is bound to be joined. That is part of the gospel of Christ or it is not. If it is, then it is part of the church's business; if it is not, then there are larger hopes for the race that

now is in other agencies than the church of the saving Christ. It is not a matter of texts of Scripture, but of the Scripture itself. It is not a matter of quotations from this or that authority, but of a place in the human order for one like unto the Son of Man. Dean Milman was right when he said of *The Imitation of Christ* that it was glaringly misnamed because "that which distinguishes Christ's religion — the love of man — is entirely and absolutely left out." Business men who take their responsibility for their employees seriously, labor leaders who share with their fellows hardships which they could avoid, social reformers who give themselves to the correction of evils and abuses, are not to feel that they are better than their creed or are going beyond the gospel that saves them. They are to feel that they are on the errand of the church of Christ as truly as they are when they plead with men to accept the Christ who is their Master and Lord. And if the church believes that the ultimate hope for all solutions of human problems lies in Christ, then it must formulate a theory of its existence that includes the attempt to solve such problems in him. Theology must provide for such a church as this — a church measured by its outgo rather than its income.

Thirdly, *the theory of the church needs to be stated in terms of unity instead of division*. That means that we are to think in wholes and not in parts. If we still have fragments, built around differing ideas, as we may well do, then we are to consider them fragments and not wholes from which



the other fragments have unfortunately separated themselves. And we must leave behind the calm assumption that the real trouble is that all the fragments are not reduced to the form and shape of the particular fragment which is dear to ourselves. Heretofore these parts, which we call churches, have held one of four relations to each other: they have been antagonistic, or indifferent, or in fellowship, or in federation. This last is as far as a great many are ready to go, lest they may sacrifice some theory of the church. These are the four relationships that exist in the villages and cities of America to-day. It is largely on the foreign mission field that the further step of union has seemed possible. A theological instructor in China tells of a meeting there when a Chinese minister arose and said, pointing to different missionaries: "You are an American Presbyterian, and you cannot help it, for you were brought up that way. You are a Canadian Methodist, and you cannot help it, for the same reason. You are an English Churchman, and you cannot help it, for you also were brought up that way. But we are Chinese Christians, and we do not propose to permit you men from abroad to keep us apart." There is large evidence of the fact that it is the hindering hand of Christendom that prevents Christian believers in mission lands from forming many unions. It is not hard to find excuses for it, and if one is hard pressed one can always fall back on solemn responsibility as a guardian of the truth, but the net result is the same — the divisions of a by-gone day are being forced on new

situations where they might be avoided. Churches there are being led into the same four relationships that mark them here.

But all these relations rest on a theology of the church. It is because the church is conceived in one set of terms instead of another that it opposes other churches or lets them alone or fraternizes with them or federates with them. And the day when the church has a theory of itself that permits unity with other fragments of its one life, it will be able to unite. If it has pet notions which cannot be surrendered, then the case is closed. It is only in part what we call a practical question; at root it is a theological one. If the church really is one, and its multiplicity is in unity, then it will not be difficult to find the path to union.

The peculiar condition in the new day that challenges the church at this point is a paradox familiar to any observer; that the world in which the church must live and work to-day is one world and at the same time persistently refuses to become one. The economic and political interdependence, the intertwining of peoples, the movements toward unity of nations and groups, are all phenomena of a recent day. They make the essential unity of the world obvious. They warrant programs that presume upon unity. But no sooner does the program appear than suspicion of the unity develops and oppositions arise from various quarters. The trouble is not with the fact of unity; it is with the spirit of unity. The world is one, but it does not deeply care to be one. Yet its greatest hope for the future is in realizing and rejoicing in its unity.



The same paradox appears when one turns to the apparently complex problems of modern life with which the church has to deal. They are the result of the pressure of essential unity of human interests which men are not willing to admit; they exist because men are one and not willing to be one. There is nothing serious on the horizon in the form of a social problem which is not simply and solely a problem of spirit. Men are so truly one that if they do not feel right toward each other, social friction is bound to come, yet it is just the refusal of men to recognize their oneness with those who seem different from them that makes the trouble. Jesus gathered it all up in the single duty of loving one's neighbor as one's self, based on an earlier love of the one God. There are not many things to do to start us toward the solution of our problems; there is one thing to do. It all roots back in a matter of spirit. And when the very institution, the one institution, that can be supposed to know that secret and to represent it and propagate it, is split into scores of fragments which either lack or resent the idea of unity, what hope is there for the world? How can a divided church, reluctant to meet on wholly common grounds, skeptical within itself over differences of teaching and accent, how can a divided church hope to heal divisions between races or between economic and social groups? What can it say that will not choke it? No one suggests dead uniformity. Men are not built that way, nor social orders. But unity, deep-down oneness, fellowship that is not patronizing but natural — one can suggest nothing less in this demanding day.

It will be simply impossible for the church to bear its testimony to the world and accomplish the task committed to it if it refuses to take this further step and to let the world know that it counts itself one body in Christ. In a great emergency it revealed a unity that surprised itself. But no sooner is the emergency apparently off than the old voices begin to sound caution and some new ones join in the note. The snag the movement for union runs against is the theory of the church itself. Theology has made those theories; it must now make new ones for the new day.

## V

### A CONCLUDING WORD

THE theology of God, of salvation, of the church — no one would pretend that these are the only points at which a measure of reconstruction may occur, but they are typical, at least. They suggest movements toward democratizing the Christian faith, not because it is the fad of the hour, but because it is of the essence of that faith. Autocracy, arbitrariness, irresponsible action, has no place in Christian theology, either regarding God or the way of salvation or the life of the church. They suggest also the bringing of our theology more constantly to the test of experience. It is what men have found God to be when they have trusted him that matters. It is the salvation that is actually saving men that counts. It is the church that does the business which the church is set to do that both God and men are apt to care for. They suggest further that theology must become an actual working basis for the ongoing of the Kingdom of God among men. It is a working God with whom we have to do, not quiescent, not programless for the human race, not resting in eternity with an arbitrary purpose which is getting itself worked out whether or no, but one whose hand is on the world he has made and loves and who calls those who believe in him to find and use that program for the

coming day. It is a salvation that fits a man for the life that is now no less than for the world to come that concerns theology, and it cannot therefore be cataclysmic, but must be vital, changing the man into a world-citizen as well as shaping him for his eternal destiny. It is a church that faces a future with such fellowship among its parts as holds them to the one task of a victorious gospel that must be found by theology and that church must be an organism which grows as it may need to express for each new day the old, assured life of its one Head.

In a recent article President Faunce has brought together two famous expressions whose contrast is suggestive for these days, both for young men who are facing the ministry and for older men who are now in the midst of church leadership. One is the couplet from Hamlet:

"The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right!"

That feeling has kept some men from entering the ministry and has made other men turn willingly from the task to other callings. The problems just now are so great, the difficulties are so many; the time is so out of joint and the task of setting it right so confused. Let such men seek the easier and simpler way of living. But in our own day there was another poet, Rupert Brooke, and his exclamation is:

"Now God be thanked who has matched us with this  
hour!"

Only men who are glad to be matched with an

awesome hour have any place in the ministry to-day. In the rough days of Israel, a leader with too few men already found that the one thing he must have among his followers was courage, and he risked his small force by ordering all who were fearful or timid to return to their homes. There were many of them, and their going left only a handful, but these knew no fear. They took the risks of a dangerous campaign with a kind of humorous glee and by their daring they set the fearful free as well as themselves. There is no Gideon to challenge us to courage, but there is a greater Leader whose cause has its great opportunity now, and the call to courage is clear in the stirring events of these days. A psychologist has been discussing recently what he calls the "religious thrill," about which he speculates profoundly. Something is wrong with a Christian leader who can face the world without that thrill to-day, and he will thrill with fear or with eagerness. If he cannot think of reconstruction in the terms of his theology without a panic or resentment, then he cannot meet the demands of the living Spirit of God. He has confused life with form, truth with phrases. But if he is sure of his gospel, sure of his faith, sure of his Master, he will be glad to face a demanding day and fit himself to it.

It was regarding the proposal of the League of Nations that our chief executive was speaking when he used terms that apply to the task of religion for the future: "The stage is set, the destiny disclosed. It has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God who led into this way. We

cannot turn back, we can only go forward, with lifted eyes and freshened spirit to follow the vision. It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth lead the way. The light streams upon the path ahead and nowhere else." It is upon that path where the light streams, where One greater than America leads the way, that we set our feet as we face the immediate future.









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